“The Imposter Phenomenon or Do I Really Belong Here?”

Understanding and Coping with the Inability to Internalize Success

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Imposter Phenomenon

also called Imposter Syndrome or Fraud Syndrome

Not to be confused with Capgras syndrome in which a sufferer believes that a familiar person has been replaced by an imposter or supernatural changeling

Objectives

At the end of this session, you should be able to:

1. Interpret your own scores from the Clance Imposter Phenomenon test
2. Be able to define the Imposter Phenomenon and its characteristics
3. Recognize how the Imposter Phenomenon can impede career progress
4. Learn about actions to take if you have Imposter Phenomenon
5. Learn how to help people you know who have Imposter Phenomenon

The Clance Imposter Phenomenon Questionnaire

It is a 20-item questionnaire comprised of **3 subscales** that will allow you to rate:

1. Your feelings about your competence and how you think others perceive it.
2. Your tendencies around dealing with objective evidence and praise about your abilities, and
3. Your tendencies around how you attribute the reasons for your success.

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Complete the Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale

http://www.paulineroseclance.com/impostor_phenomenon.html

The Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scoring

Determine where you fall on the IP Continuum:

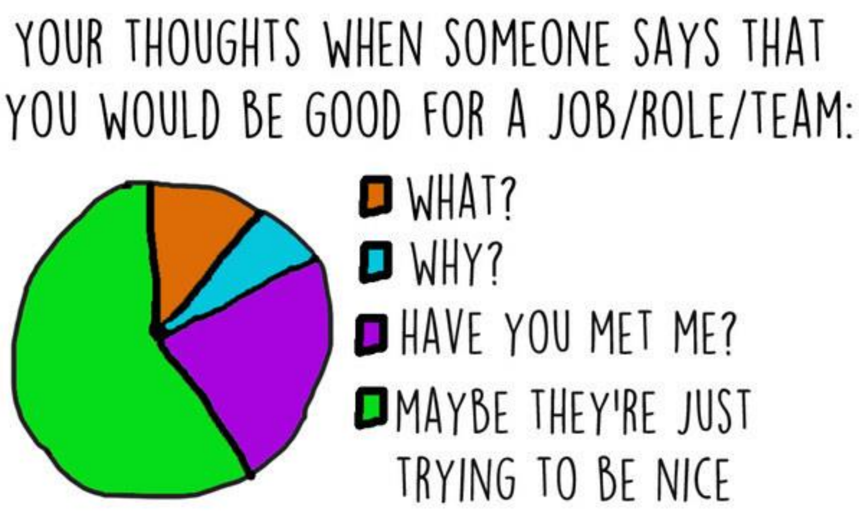
- Few Impostor characteristics (40 or less);
- Moderate IP experiences (between 41 and 60);
- Frequent Impostor feelings (between 61 and 80)
- Often and Intense IP experiences (80 or higher).

Note: The higher the score, the more frequently and seriously the Impostor Phenomenon interferes in a person's life.

- My scores: December 2011…72 October 2014…56

Imposter Phenomenon Defined

"Individuals who are high achievers who believe themselves to be less intelligent and less competent than others perceive them to be"



Not a psychiatric diagnosis

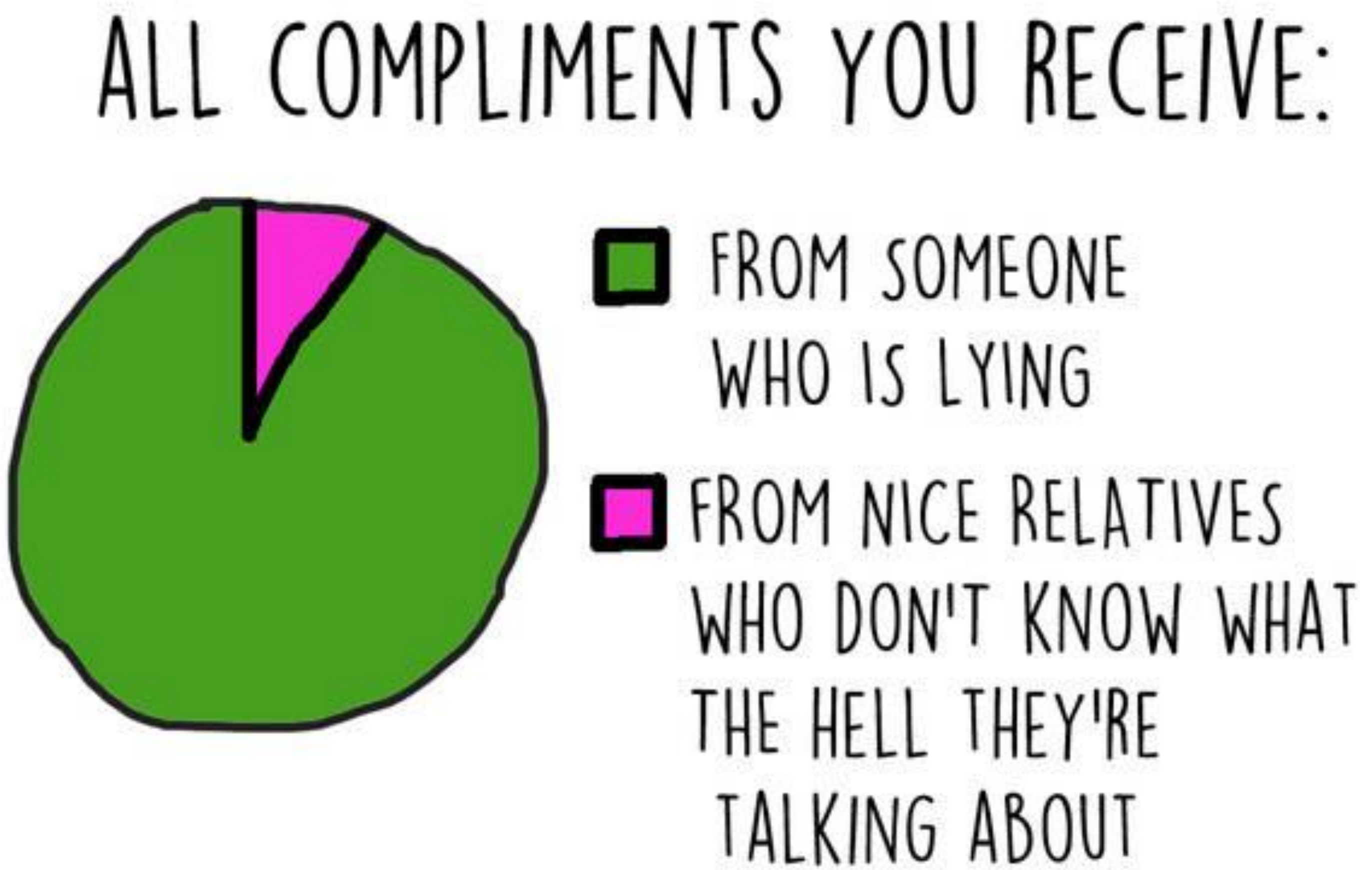
Imposter Phenomenon (IP) is not classified as a psychiatric disorder…

coined by clinical psychologists Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes in 1978

- was traditionally perceived as an ingrained personality trait
- now recognized as a reaction to certain situations
- certain people are more prone to impostor feelings, or experience them more intensely

Attributes of Imposter Phenomenon

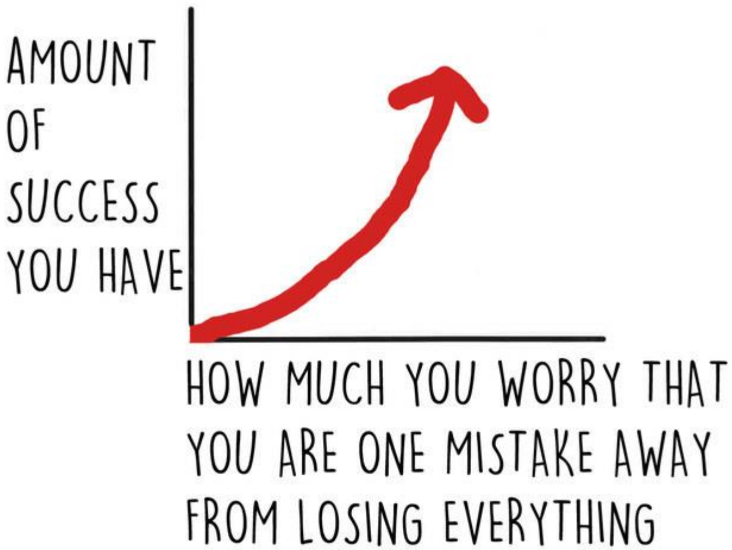
1. Inability to internalize your accomplishments



Attributes of Imposter Phenomenon

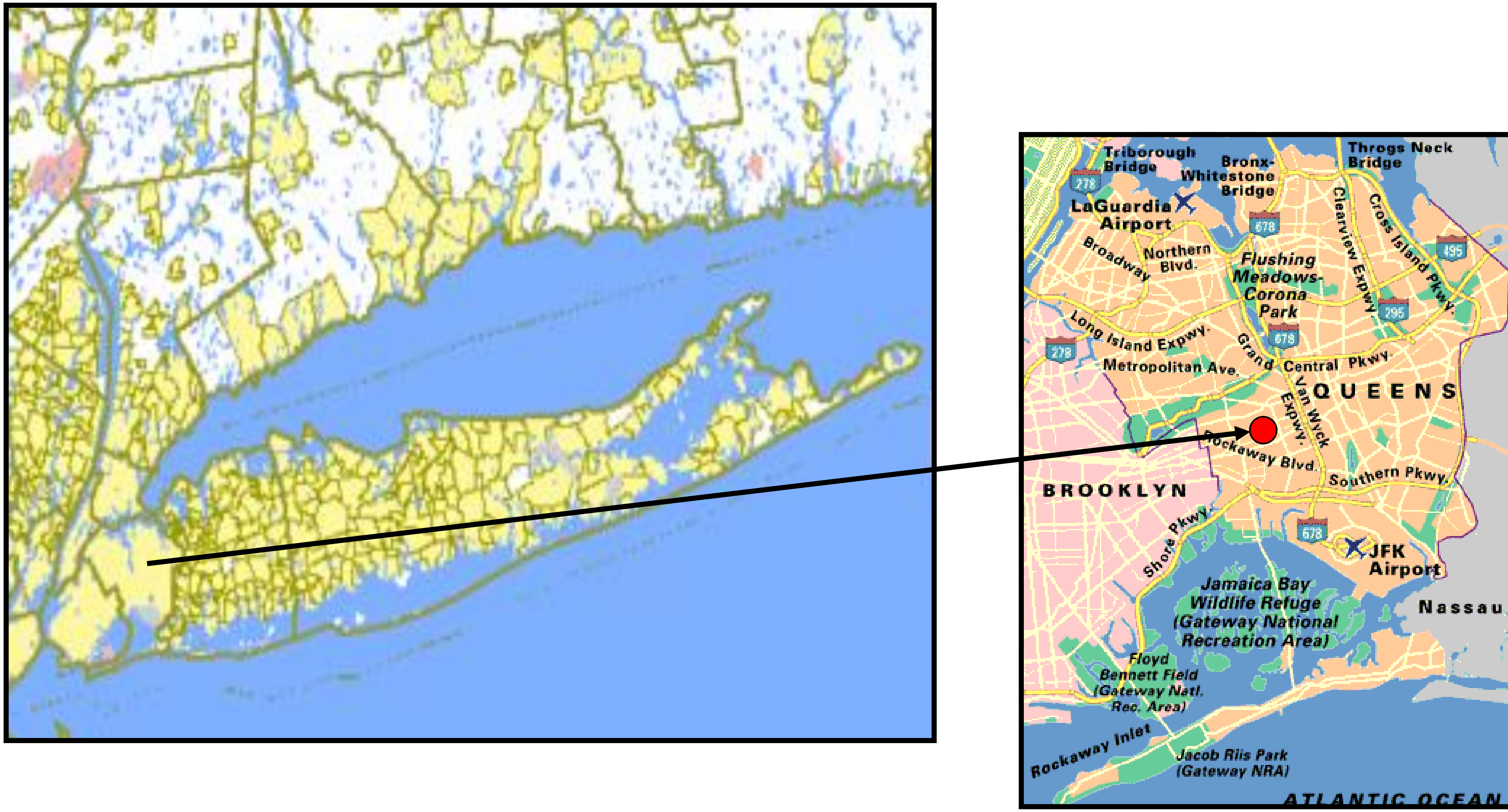
2. Despite external evidence, you remain convinced that you are a fraud and do not deserve the success you have achieved
3. A persistent tendency to attribute your success to external factors (luck, timing, quota filling, others being deceived). (Jarrett, 2010)
4. Feeling that other people have an inflated perception of your abilities
5. Fear that you are going to be “found out”





My scores: December 2011…72 October 2014…56

My story and experiences



My story and experiences









My story and experiences









My story and experiences

- Full scholarship to competitive private high school
- Full scholarship to college…finished in 3 years
- Full scholarship for MS degree
- PhD Cornell University Medical College
- Postdoc Vanderbilt
- Associate Professor (with tenure), Department of Medicine
- NIH, VA, JDRF funded
- Vice Chair for Faculty Development, Department of Medicine
- Director of Enrichment, Training and Outreach – Vanderbilt Diabetes Research Training Center
- Chair, ADA Awards committee
- National and international invitations to speak

Who is susceptible to IP?

Often found in persons that are in professions different from family of origin

- First generation college students
- First to complete graduate or professional school
- Career orientation different from parents is significant
- Once thought to be more common among women who are successful in their careers, but has since been shown to occur equally in men

Signs and “symptoms” of IP

- Anxiety, depression, and psychological distress (Oriel et al, 2004; Henning et al, 1998)
- Perfectionism and fear of failing, disappointing others (Henning et al, 1998)
- Fear of success - paradoxical (Fried-Buchalter, 1992)



Origins of Imposter Phenomenon

- Early childhood expectations from parents
- Societal expectations
  - "Women, minorities and other disenfranchised individuals are socialized in many realms to exist at the base of the power hierarchy" (McIntosh, 1985)



Predictors of IP

- Highly successful individuals (yet different from role expectations)
- Lack of modeling or support of achievements
- Distorted view that brightness=perfection
- Fears that any error=incompetence
- Lack of self-confidence (paradoxical)
- Anxiety

Consequences

- Misconceptions may get in the way of achievement . . . Internal barrier to achievement

- Set a lower performance expectancy
- Hinder abilities to *advocate* for yourself
- Hinder abilities to *negotiat*e for yourself

- By trying to avoid failure you also avoid success
- You will lead from where you sit

How can you overcome this?

Cognitive Behavioral Techniques

- ACT
  - **A**ccept that you feel anxious
  - **C**hoose to see/view things the way you want them to be…creative visualization
  - **T**ake action to make things that way



"fake it 'til you make it"

Take action . . .

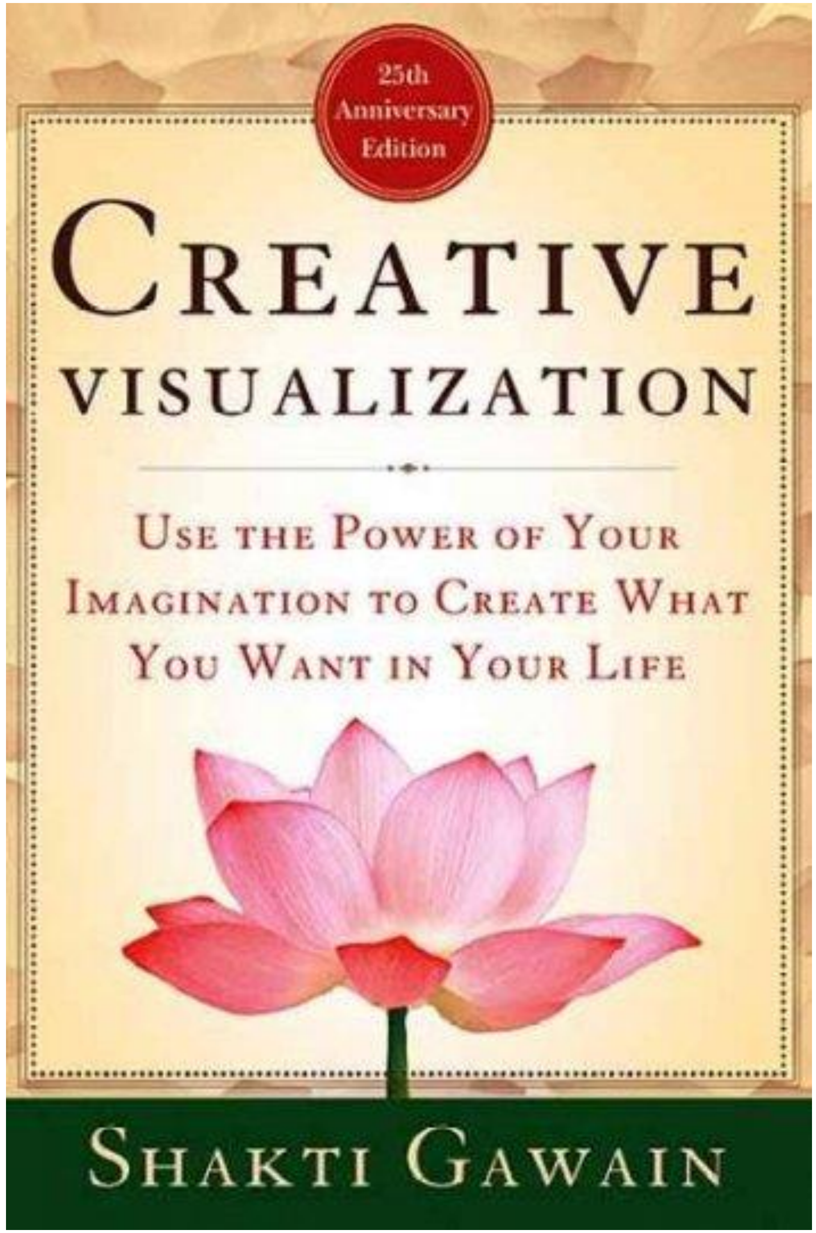
- Consult with a counselor
- Talk to others about it
- Request validation from others (keep it genuine)
- If you can’t eliminate IP, develop a strategy to *reduce* or *manage* it

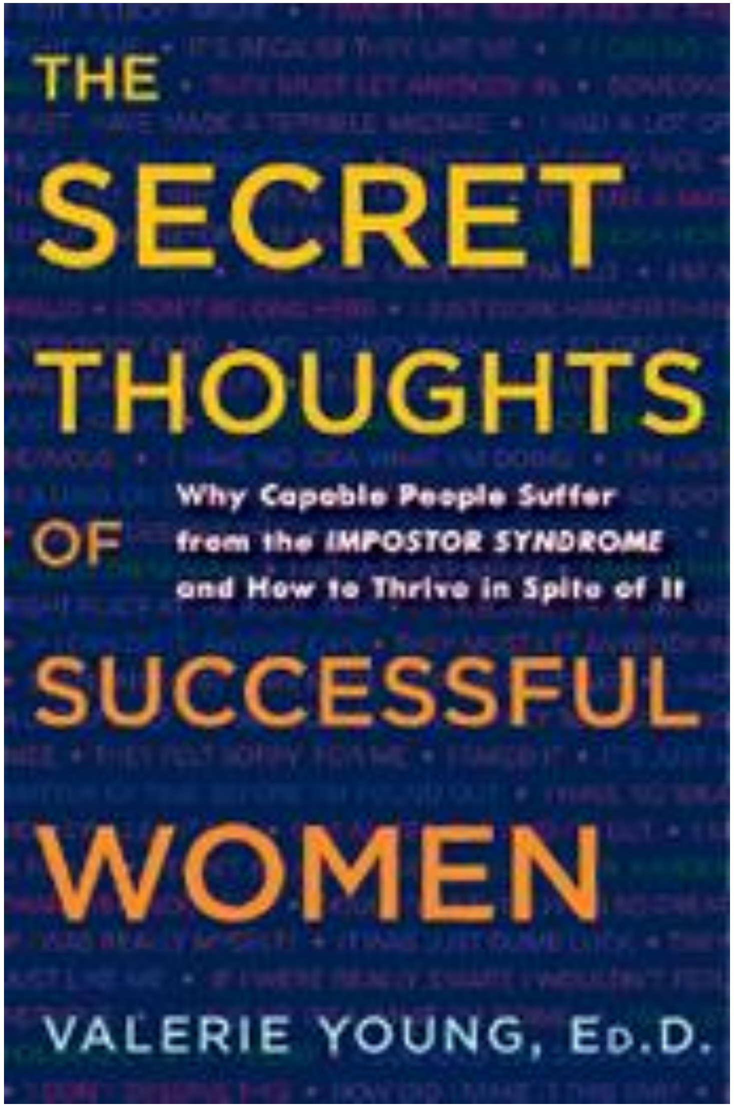


6 Strategies to Kick Imposter Syndrome to the Curb

By REBECCA THORMAN (On Careers blogger)

1. Write it out
2. Make a list of good things/ accomplishments
3. Take action
4. Become a mentor
5. Find supporters
6. Understand the why


25th
Anniversary
Edition
CREATIVE
VISUALIZATION
USE THE POWER OF YOUR
IMAGINATION TO CREATE WHAT
YOU WANT IN YOUR LIFE
SHAKTI GAWAIN

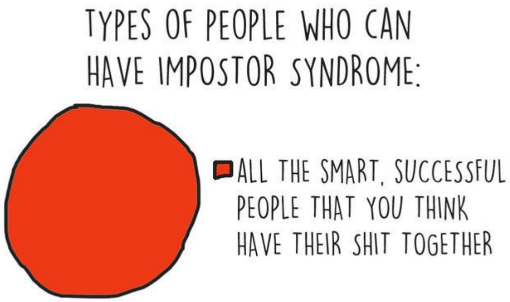


research on self-limiting feelings and beliefs about self and success

reasons why so many accomplished women feel as though they are "faking it" – impostors in their own lives and career

practical ways to banish the thought patterns that undermine your ability to feel — and act — as bright and capable as you truly are

Summary



- Attributes of IP include fears or feelings that people have inflated one’s abilities, and one’s true performance will be discovered. Another element is attributing one’s success to external factors.

- A major consequence of experiencing IP is having these misconceptions get in the way of one’s achievement

- Signs of IP include: Anxiety, depression, and psychological distress; Perfectionism; and Fear of success

- Helpful techniques for addressing these feeling or fears include:
  - ACT:

    Accept that you feel anxious

    Choose to see/view things the way you want them to be e.g. “I am a competent professional and a lovable and capable person.”

    Take action to make things that way

  - Group experience (not necessarily group psychotherapy)

Discussion

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